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# FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

### STORES

THE two stores which are not in the *saḥa* are small, specialized, and not always open. They will not be considered further. Another store building was closed throughout the period of study. The four remaining stores are located in the *saḥa*, two (under one roof) on the north side of the main road. One of these is owned by a man of lineage C,XVI, the other by a man of lineage A,III. The building itself is owned by a man of lineage C,XXI. The two stores on the south side of the main road are both somewhat larger than the other two and longer established, going back at least to World War I. Both are owned by members of lineage B,XII. All of these stores are "general stores" from the point of view of the merchandise they carry, and from the point of view of their function as meeting places for the men of the village.

In two of the stores, the one in building 8 and one of those in building 6 (see Fig. 3), the proprietor of each is regularly assisted by one of his sons. The other two work alone for the most part. (The son of one of the latter has recently opened his own store in Ḥilwi.) To some extent, there is some specialization. The gasoline-driven mill, mentioned earlier, is part of the store in building 8 whose proprietor, at the beginning of the study period, was employing a man of lineage A,VIII (his wife's brother) as miller. Grain was imported and ground to flour which was sold in the village and the Qurni. During the period of study, it was decided that this operation was not profitable, it being more practical all around to import flour. The proprietor of the store in building 10 is a butcher who both slaughters animals and sells meat. He also slaughters for the people in Jiddayil. The unassisted proprietor of the store in building 6 sometimes sells meat but does not slaughter animals himself. The proprietor of the other store in building 6, established for only one year, is the priest.

By and large, the stores carry the same goods at, apparently, the same fixed prices. There is no barter. Negotiations are carried out on a cash-and-carry basis, and every sale is recorded item by item. An informal and composite inventory includes the following: flour, rice, grain, peas, beans, coffee beans, sugar and nuts (set about on the floor in open sacks with prices per kilogram written on tags); vegetables and fruits (in season) set on the floor or large trays or in baskets; eggs, hung from the ceiling in wire baskets; various types of hard and chewy

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444 candies, each kind in a large glass jar; bottles of *'araq*, sweet summer drink extracts, and denatured alcohol (for preheating Primus stoves and lanterns); writing paper, pens, pencils, and ink; hairpins, combs, toothpaste, and soap; flashlights and batteries—all of these on shelves set against the walls. We can generalize by saying that the stores provide the villagers with all their purchased food except bread and with small items of everyday use. Conspicuously lacking are clothes, furniture, and all household utensils except the pottery drinking jars which are carried by some of the stores. All other larger items are bought directly from Jbayl or Beirut.

One person said that he made it a practice to patronize all the stores in order not to slight any of the proprietors. How common this practice is the writer does not know. Since the stores are so close together, patronization on the basis of proximity is not likely to be a factor in the determination of particular clienteles.

477 One would expect that the stores would be in keen competition, and, certainly, commercial competition is nothing new or foreign to Lebanon. But among the village stores there appeared to be little if any competition, and some assistance between proprietors was observed. One informant explained the situation in this way:

> Well, they *are* in competition, but you see [and here he seemed quite at a loss for words. He started again:] There is a saying in Arabic *Likull ʾinsaan rizquhu*. It means: "Every person has his fortune." Well, you know, it really means everyone will receive his due. You see, one helps the other because later the other will help the one. But it is more than mutual help; when X helps Y, they may not want to do it, but they do it anyway because they do not want people to think that they are enemies or jealous of each other.

577 The saying which was used by this informant is a positive expression, similar
621 in connotation to the lilies of the field passage in the Sermon on the Mount, of
476 the fatalism which is commonly attributed, with some justification, to the Arabs. We might elucidate its full meaning by paraphrasing it as follows: "You will get your just reward in whatever you are doing if you behave justly." In this case, behaving justly involves the kind of mutual help within an in-group (the village) which is essential to its solidarity. But also, in a wider sense, it is the writer's opinion that among the Arabs, competition for its own sake is not a *generalized* behavioral value, though they do come close to this in their social and cultural group rivalries. Furthermore, none of the four proprietors concerned in this matter is dependent solely on his store for his income. Each is a landowner and maintains his property for agricultural purposes.

444 Turning, now, to the function of the stores as meeting places for the men,
617 we are reminded of the interesting notion, set forth by Kohn (1936, p. 70), that in the Mediterranean area generally, the center of personal and social life is the
[265] open, public place—forum, agora, coffee house, and open shop.

In Munṣif, there is no coffee house and the stores to some extent take the

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place of one. Close friends of each proprietor frequently sit down with him to a game of backgammon or cards. Other customers while away several minutes with small talk whenever they make a purchase, and small groups of them often collect in the store, some sitting, some standing, to discuss the news, prices, and to exchange gossip. There is not a great deal more to it than this. The point is simply that the stores are not merely agencies for the transfer of goods.

## BAKERIES

As has been noted before, there are two, rather widely spaced, bakeries in the village. Like the stores, they are privately owned economic institutions, and they are intensively used as loci of social interaction on the part of women just as the stores are on the part of men. Here the women meet regularly and for protracted lengths of time.

The women who regularly make their own bread (some do not make their own but buy it) do not do so every day. Depending upon the amount she needs to feed her family, the housewife will make bread anywhere from once every three days to once a week. Each time she will spend two or three hours in the bakery with four or five other women. Standing outside one of the bakeries, one hears intermittently the crackle of brushwood just put on the fire, and constantly the women's chatter, laughter, and sometimes singing, accompanied by the rhythmical slapping of hands and dough on stone.

The interior of the bakery in the *saba* is rather dark since it has no windows and only two narrow doors. The building is trapezoidal in shape, with the oven in the narrow end. The oven is a large rectangular masonry structure, with one aperture on the side at a convenient height above the floor of a small pit in which the baker stands. The floor of the interior of the oven is smooth stone or concrete. The fire burns on the left-hand side of this floor. Between the oven and the doors there is a large stone slab raised about a foot off the floor. Around this half a dozen women can sit and work comfortably. To the right of the table and the oven, between them, there are several bins into which the baker tosses the loaves as they come from the oven.

The woman prepares her dough at home, making the necessary number of fist-sized lumps each of which will be made into a loaf. These she then takes to the bakery on a large tray carried on her head. The women form their lumps of dough into disks about a foot in diameter by slapping and kneading them against the stone table. The operation does not call for the same kind of skill which is required in preparing another type of "mountain bread" which used to be made in Munṣif and can still be found easily enough in some other villages, a loaf as much as two and a half feet in diameter. The baking technique is different, and only one loaf at a time can be done.

The baker is equipped with an elongated wooden paddle upon which five disks

at a time can be placed.

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bers" (1929, pp. 80–83). As far as doctrine alone is concerned, this generalization appears to be true of the Arab Orthodox, but among them, nevertheless, sect affiliation as a focus of in-group loyalty is strong.

Bliss describes the Mass and Sacraments of the Syrian Greek Orthodox Church at some length (1912, pp. 130–47), and it is not necessary to repeat his material here in a body. The practices in Munṣif appear to conform to his generalizations.

Ordinarily, the priest goes to the Church about seven in the morning on Sundays, but the congregation does not begin to come in till about eight o'clock. In the intervening period he prepares the elements behind the ikonostasis. Each Sunday one housewife presents five loaves of holy bread (*qurbaan*) which are used in the service. Apparently all the women in the village take their turn at this. The loaf is about the same size as a regular loaf but is about an inch thick. In the middle of each loaf a device is impressed with a wooden stamp (*ṭaabi'*). The device bears four pairs of Greek letters arranged crosswise which are an abbreviation of "Jesus Christ conquers."

The following is a brief description of one Sunday mass which was attended early in the summer. It is representative of several which were attended.

At eight fifteen only the priest and an elderly man were in the church, chanting responsively. At that point, a middle-aged man entered, took his post at one of the lecterns and began chanting. About five minutes later, a young man came in, went to the other lectern and joined in. Next, three small boys entered and sat down in the wooden stalls. Then another young man arrived and went behind the ikonostasis to assist the priest. After that, several more young and middle-aged men came in in short order. In all, about fifteen men were present, together with about an equal number of children of both sexes and about half a dozen young women, one of whom had prepared the *qurbaan* for that day.

The chanting was maintained continuously, with certain individuals who are regular attendants taking noticeable part. Toward the end of the service, the priest took the Host into the congregation, carrying the chalice and plate, which held small pieces of *qurbaan*, on a silver tray. His assistant walked backwards in front of him, holding up a cross. Each member of the congregation bowed as the Host approached him. After this, the assistant took up a collection and distributed *qurbaan* to each person present as well as to several who had been sitting outside all the time.

After the service, the young men, as usual, took turns ringing the bell, leaping off the ground and pulling the cord with all their weight. Others stood around chatting.

The stores are open every Sunday.

## FEASTS AND FASTS

Every day of the year is a saint's day, but special observances are made only on a few. Besides Easter and the various special holy days in Lent, the Syrian Greek

361 [795] of the other three project village tere is one mosque. There are no Christian churches here as this region is populated by Moslems of the Shee'ah sect. These are often referred to as Metwalis and and are followers of the descendats of Ali.

362 The 912 dwelling units in th five project villages house an average of 6.1. persons per unit. A positive building trend has taken place in the area during the past five years. For this period, only 'Adloun reported more buillings torn down or otherwise made uninhabitable than were constructed. In the other four villages the opposite trend was reported. No attempt was made to determine the types of units construced and heavy reliance should not be placed on Table IX, «Construction Trend in Last Five Years», for the data in this table are subject to a high degree of error.

*Business and Industry*

444 265 In the project villages the business district generally is composed of a few small shops selling meat, grain, groceries, small items of hardware, and a limited amount of other items. In these five villages there is a total of thirty-four small shops. There are 17 general stores, 11 meat stores, 2 barber shops and 4 cafes. As the shopping centers of Beirut and Saida are easily accessible by low-cost bus transportation, general stores carry only those items in heavy demand. Several of the cafes service the main Beirut-Saida-Tyre road. Of all the businesses, only these cafes employ the services of personnel other than the proprietor. Only the village of Loubya lacks any form of business center.

It is interesting to note tha in these small villages the meat shops often cooperate by assigning specific days of operation for each shopkeeper. On days allotted to one shopkeeper, the carcasses will hang from his hooks and nearby meat shops will be closed. All the stores are extremely small and require but a meager capital investment.

433 There are no power-operated factories in the project area and very few home industries or handicraft enterprises. Two hand-operated olive presses were reportesd at Sakaskiyah and one at Loubya. With no wood or mineral resources at hand and with no electrical power available, this total lack of village industialization is not surprising.